

Chapter 3

Country-Specific Counseling and Assistance



Trade Information Center (TIC)/ITA/U.S. Department of Commerce

TIC specialists provide export counseling and assistance on **Asia, Western Europe, Latin America, Africa, the Near East,** and the **Western Hemisphere**, including the **North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)**. Country-specific counseling is available at no cost on country conditions; commercial laws, regulations, and practices; standards; government procurement; certification requirements; distribution channels; business travel; opportunities and best prospects for U.S. companies; tariffs, taxes, and customs procedures; commercial difficulties encountered in doing business abroad; and other market information. The TIC is the U.S. government's designated point of contact for help with documentation to qualify for NAFTA benefits and other free-trade agreements. The TIC Web site has extensive country and regional information, including a downloadable NAFTA certificate of origin, a tariff and Harmonized System number lookup tool, and contact information on foreign customs offices and trade offices in the United States.

Contact: TIC staff, 1-800-USA-TRAD(E) (1-800-872-8723); fax (202) 482-4473; e-mail: tic@ita.doc.gov; home page: www.export.gov/tic.



Business Information Service for the Newly Independent States (BISNIS)/ITA/U.S. Department of Commerce

BISNIS provides market information, practical advice, trade lead opportunities, and referrals to U.S. and Eurasian companies of all sizes to facilitate U.S. exports and other forms of business development with Russia and other Newly Independent States (NIS) in Eurasia (the former Soviet Union). BISNIS services, free for U.S. and Eurasian companies, include:

BISNIS Online (www.bisnis.doc.gov), containing the latest market information, leads, and resources for doing business with the NIS countries;

E-mail updates on the latest market reports and leads from Eurasia;

U.S. export and partner leads for Eurasia (*BISNIS Trades & Tenders* and *BISNIS Search for Partners*);

BISNIS Finance Link, for U.S. and NIS companies that have agreed on a U.S. export transaction and seek financing;

ExpoLink Eurasia, a unique Russian-language promotion tool for U.S. companies; **Consultation and guidance** for both practical and strategic business development decisions; and *BISNIS Bulletin*, the monthly BISNIS newsletter highlighting commercial developments in Eurasia.

Contact: BISNIS staff, 1-800-USA-TRAD(E) or (202) 482-4655; fax (202) 482-2293; e-mail: bisnis@ita.doc.gov; home page: www.bisnis.doc.gov.

Central and Eastern Europe Business Information Center (CEEbic)/ITA/U.S. Department of Commerce



CEEbic offers a wide array of services, business counseling, and information products primarily designed to help small and medium-sized U.S. firms expand into Central and Eastern European markets. CEEbic's Washington-based trade specialists and overseas staff in 15 countries of the region work together to implement this unique program. Among CEEbic's key products are *CEEbicnet*, a Web site that features trade and investment leads, sources of finance, regularly updated market information, and the latest news from the region, including unclassified U.S. embassy reports; the monthly publication, *Central and Eastern Europe Commercial Update*; the weekly e-mail publication, *Southeastern Europe Business Brief*; and the biweekly e-mail publication, *Central Europe Northern Tier Brief*. CEEbic also has three special programs, the **European Union Accession Initiative**, to help U.S. firms reap the benefits of EU accession; the **Southeast Europe Initiative**, to counsel U.S. companies doing business in the region; and the **Western Romania Initiative**, to help U.S. firms uncover significant opportunities there.

Contact: CEEbic staff, 1-800-USA-TRAD(E) or (202) 482-2645; fax (202) 482-3898; EU accession hotline, (202) 482-9090; Southeast Europe hotline, (202) 482-5471; home page: www.export.gov/ceebic.

U.S. Embassies and Consulates: U.S. Commercial Service (USCS)/U.S. Department of Commerce; Foreign Service/U.S. Department of State; Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)/U.S. Department of Agriculture

The **Commerce Department's USCS** officers support U.S. business interests in American embassies, consulates, and trade centers in leading export markets. They collect information about trends and barriers to trade in their representative countries. USCS officers also identify trade and investment opportunities and assist U.S. firms with a variety of commercial events and programs, including high-level government advocacy.

U.S. Department of State staff report extensively on economic developments abroad and their impact on trade and investment. Foreign Service officers (FSOs) provide

political and economic briefings and advise U.S. firms on the business culture and practices of the host country. They advocate on behalf of U.S. business with key ministries in foreign countries. FSOs are responsible for commercial work in 96 embassies and 36 consulates not covered by the Commercial Service. FSOs work closely with their Commercial Service colleagues worldwide.

The **Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)** maintains more than 60 offices overseas, mostly located in U.S. embassies, to represent the interests of U.S. agriculture and carry out market promotion. The FAS also offers assistance to exporters of U.S. farm and forest products in 20 agricultural trade offices overseas. The FAS supports U.S. food exporters with marketing and assists them at foreign trade shows. Agricultural FSOs perform advocacy activities in policy negotiations, monitor and report on market access, and represent individual U.S. exporters in foreign customs disputes.

Contact: For assistance in accessing international programs, call 1-800-USA-TRAD(E) (1-800-872-8723); State Department, (202) 647-4000; Outreach and Exporter Assistance, (202) 720-7420; AgExport Services Division, (202) 720-7420; Web sites: Commercial Service, www.export.gov/commercialservice; Department of State, www.state.gov/www/regions_missions.html; Office of International Information Programs at the U.S. Department of State, <http://usinfo.state.gov>; Foreign Agricultural Service, www.fas.usda.gov.



U.S. Commercial Centers/ITA/U.S. Department of Commerce

U.S. Commercial Centers located abroad house state export development agencies, industry associations, government agencies, and other strategic partners. The Commercial Centers represent integrated business networks that leverage resources and extend the range of public-private support.

Commercial Centers are located in promising emerging markets and commercial hubs. They are strategically placed in the heart of business districts, close to prospective business partners for U.S. companies. They provide ideal bases for U.S. companies to track down business leads, negotiate contracts with U.S. government advocacy, gain perspective on market conditions and local business practices, find and assess reliable business partners, host receptions for potential business partners, stage technical seminars, launch new products/services, or even set up permanent offices. The direct access to both Commercial Service staff and programs as well as business facilities (including fully equipped offices, meeting rooms, exhibit space, etc.) make each Commercial Center particularly useful to small and medium-sized companies.

◆ U.S. Commercial Center, São Paulo, Brazil

The first U.S. Commercial Center, São Paulo, has built a strong base for expanding public-private partnerships and fostering interagency cooperation.

Contact: Director, U.S. Commercial Center, São Paulo, Brazil, +55 (11) 3897-40-45; fax +55 (11) 3061-00-84; home page: www.buyusa.gov/brazil.

◆ **U.S. Commercial Center, Shanghai, China**

The Commercial Center in Shanghai, the financial hub of China, positions U.S. companies to compete in the entire Chinese economic area. The Center houses state economic development offices for Illinois, Michigan, Washington, and the city and county of Denver, Colorado; the Association for Manufacturing Technology; and the Packaging Machinery Manufacturers' Institute.

Contact: Director, U.S. Commercial Center, Portman Shanghai Center, Suite 631, 1369 Nanjing Road West, Shanghai 200040, China, +86 (21) 6279-7630; fax +86 (21) 6279-7639; Web sites: www.buyusa.gov/china/en or www.usembassy-china.org.cn/english/commercial/index.html.

◆ **Ronald H. Brown U.S. Commercial Center, Johannesburg, South Africa**

Opened in 1998, the Ronald H. Brown Commercial Center houses the Michigan State trade office in addition to its other services.

Contact: Senior Commercial Officer, Ronald H. Brown Commercial Center, 15 Chaplain Road, Illovo 2196, Johannesburg, South Africa, +27 (11) 778-4801; fax +27 (11) 442-8798; home page: www.buyusa.gov/southafrica.

Regional Bureaus/U.S. Department of State

Country desk officers in regional bureaus in Washington, D.C., maintain regular contact with overseas diplomatic missions and can provide U.S. exporters and investors with economic and political information from both a country and regional perspective.

Contact: Africa, (202) 647-3502; East Asia and Pacific, (202) 647-6600; Europe, (202) 647-4174; Russia and the Newly Independent States, (202) 647-3112; Near East and North Africa, (202) 736-7370; South Asia, (202) 736-4331; Western Hemisphere, (202) 647-4458. Home page: www.state.gov/www/regions.html.

